



Liberty and Individualism: The Twin Major Themes in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat

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ABSTRACT *Chetan Bhagat has been applauded and viewed as a versatile author by the youth at presently in India. It is no exaggeration to call him the biggest selling English language novelist in India's history. One can easily sense and guess with little effort about his major themes in his novels namely – freedom and liberty, gender differences, individualism, lacking of integrity in the present educational system, effect of globalization and so on. This present paper of us mainly aims to focus on two major themes – liberty as well as individualism in the select novels of Chetan Bhagat.*

Introduction:

Chetan Bhagat undoubtedly a gifted writer in handling the themes and major issues that are related to the youth and their concerns in particular. As mentioned earlier, it is no exaggeration to call him an exclusive and top-notch author in the sight of the youth. He always tries to the extent possible to give voices to the unheard feelings, emotions, opinions, and inner thought of the youth in each of his novels. A careful study of Chetan Bhagat's novels by a reader can sense the two major themes – liberty and individualism in all his writings.

In his debut novel, *Five Point Someone*, the three major characters – Hari, Alok and Ryan who always strive for liberty and individualism to the maximum extent possible in their lives. They least bothered about the education system which is existed at IIT Delhi. Unlike other students they never kept quiet in raising their voices and fight bravely against the very old and meaningless rules that are made by the old educationists whose knowledge was confined and limited to some extent. In the guise of these three said characters, Chetan reveals the horrible education system at IIT Delhi in an able and effective manner. He makes a dare attempt in criticizing meaningless education system at IIT Delhi where the students are compelled to concentrate on their examinations by mugging up the subjects instead of giving place to knowledge a top priority. The educationists bother least about the creativity which is viewed as an important skill in the sight of employers in all the reputed companies at present. All the three protagonists raise their voices against of these age old educationists and shirking their classes without caring them and above all giving much weightage to the urgent required qualities by the present corporate world such as innovation, creativity, practical knowledge and self-respect. They do not worry much about the comments made by their teacher and other students when they underperform in the exams, instead they feel proud for being freethinkers and icons of liberty and individualism. In the entire novel Chetan not only depicts the problems and issues of the young students but also expresses his marvellous thoughts how best these young minds can be dealt in a highly effective way.

In the novel, *One Night @ the Call Center*, Chetan Bhagat takes up the issue of the problems of the workers in the

call center as well as their expectations and aspirations to remain the icons of liberty and individualism. All the major characters in the novel – Shyam, Vroom, Esha, Radhika and Priyanka are plagued with the problems, fears, insecurities faced by them and sincerely expect to be true libertarians in the upcoming years. Shyam who is a fine web designer wishes to become a team leader in his company. By joining his hands with his friend Vroom, he wants to save the endangered job positions of the call center employees due to slack in computer and software industry. Both of them have succeeded in saving their company from closing down. But they do not hesitate for a while to sacrifice their jobs for their fellow colleagues who are also sailing in the same boat and withstand patience when their designed project is plagiarized by their boss. Giving no scope for disappointment they resolve to start their own web designing firm and this audacious attempt in the novel makes them as the embodiment of genuine liberty and individualism. Both Shyam and Vroom strongly believe their capabilities and do not lose confidence in themselves in hard times. Radhika who is always gentle and sober does all the household chores bears the cross despite the rude comments made by her mother-in-law every day. After coming to know the truth about her husband who is disloyal toward her by loving another woman, she reacts as a cobra when a stone or something thrown at it and she instantaneously left her family without second thought. Esha for getting modelling assignments left her home for Delhi to translate her dream into reality. It goes without saying that every character's intention in this particular novel is set free themselves from the chains that are tied to them and lead a life of libertarians.

In his novel, *2 states*: The story of my Marriage, Chetan Bhagat deals with complex human relationships and how two lovers of two totally different states, traditions, culture, customs have made an extra effort to turn their dream into reality. The central character in the novel, Krish, by shedding and keeping aside all his religious fears, threats and duties follows his inner-self which is nothing but God himself. Being a Punjabi he takes a valiant step to marry a girl named Ananya from Tamil culture. He bears the burnt good-naturedly so as to overcome two different cultures, pride and prejudices, diversities, the age old traditions etc. It is a herculean task to Krish to get acceptance for his marriage from both the families who strongly oppose.

The parents of both the families are impatient and disapprove the wedlock of Ananya and Krish and they are also insecure about the relations in and the problems that are going to be confronted in the future. Despite of all these worries, Krish never turns back and keeps on trying to change the mind-set of his elders and at last succeeds in his endeavour and throughout the novel Krish residues as a libertarian and listens to his heart and inner-self. By the end of novel, Krish marries Ananya and thus sets an example to the youth of this large country to be brave enough in their lives and should have abundant patience to achieve something remarkable.

Conclusion:

Chetan Bhagat, the budding novelist is an expert in handling the themes of youth especially their problems and also the burning issues in the present society. It can be understood by studying his novels intensely that almost every major character makes an earnest attempt for their individualism and liberty as exactly lived by Henry David Thoreau, an American Transcendentalist in the 17th century. Chetan Bhagat encourages and motivates the youth to lead a life according to their wish and inner-self but not as a blind follower of others and thus advocates the youth to cultivate libertarian outlook through his writings.

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